ST. OLAF COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Faculty/Guest Recital:

A Thread Through Time

RAY SHOWS, *VIOLIN*

JOHN JENSEN, *PIANO*



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026 • 7:00PM

URNESS RECITAL HALL

PROGRAM

A THREAD THROUGH TIME

Violin Sonata No. 8 in G major, Op. 30, No. 3 — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

I. Allegro assai
II. Tempo di minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso
III. Allegro piacevole

Whispering — Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016)

Two Pieces — Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937)

I. Waltz
II. Christmas Serenade

Violin Sonata in A major — César Franck (1822–1890)

I. Allegretto ben moderato
II. Allegro
III. Recitativo–Fantasia: Ben moderato
IV. Allegretto poco mosso

Beethoven, Rautavaara, Silvestrov, and Franck

This program brings together four composers separated by more than a century yet connected by a shared fascination with the expressive possibilities of the violin and piano. At its center is a journey from Beethoven's Classical clarity through increasingly atmospheric and reflective sound worlds, arriving finally at the expansive lyricism of César Franck.

See *Program Notes* for more.

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BIOGRAPHY

Ray Shows, *violin*

For violinist Ray Shows, chamber music is both an art of profound intimacy and a means of bringing people together. A Colombian-American artist whose musical life bridges performance, education, and artistic leadership, Shows has devoted his career to exploring the expressive possibilities of chamber music while creating opportunities for musicians and audiences to discover its enduring power.



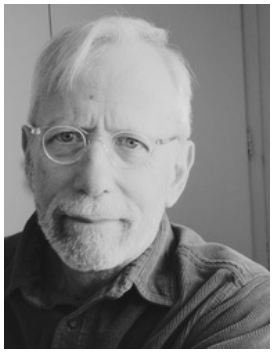
He is first violinist of the Artaria String Quartet, an ensemble he co-founded in Boston four decades ago and now recognized for its eloquent interpretations, expressive depth, and adventurous programming. Since 2001, Artaria has been a prominent presence in Minnesota's musical life, performing throughout the region and championing both masterworks and contemporary voices.

Shows is the director of the Stringwood Chamber Music Festival, co-director of the Artaria Chamber Music School, and founder and artistic director of the internationally recognized Saint Paul String Quartet Competition. His work as a performer and educator has brought him to institutions including Boston College, Viterbo University, Florida State University, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, and the Tanglewood Institute, where he served as a Teaching Artist in Residence. He currently serves on the faculty of St. Olaf College.

A recipient of a McKnight Performing Artist Fellowship, Shows studied at Boston University and Florida State University with Roman Totenberg and Gerardo Ribeiro, and pursued chamber music studies with Eugene Lehner – legendary violist of the Kolisch Quartet – as well as distinguished members of the Budapest, Juilliard, Emerson, Cleveland, LaSalle, and Muir quartets. Whether performing, teaching, or nurturing emerging artists, Shows brings an abiding belief in the transformative power of music and the importance of creating meaningful connections between musicians, audiences, and communities.

John Jenson, *piano*

Pianist John Jensen is a versatile and imaginative musician whose career spans classical performance, jazz, recording, and musical collaboration. A Southern California native, he studied at Occidental College and the University of Southern California with distinguished musicians John Crown and Ingolf Dahl, developing a musical voice distinguished by interpretive insight, stylistic breadth, and a deep commitment to collaborative artistry.



Jensen's performing career has taken him from appearances on The Andy Williams Show to international tours with the Mirecourt Trio. Since making Minnesota his home, he has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and VocalEssence, earning a reputation as a sensitive and resourceful musical partner.

An accomplished recording artist, Jensen's 30 CD recordings range from the music of Charles Ives and Paul Reale to classic jazz repertoire, reflecting his curiosity across musical traditions. Equally at home in the intricacies of chamber music and the spontaneity of jazz, he brings an uncommon combination of technical command, musical imagination, and attentive listening to every collaboration. As a pianist, educator, and mentor, Jensen embodies the spirit of musical exploration and generosity that makes chamber music such a vital and rewarding art form.

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven — Violin Sonata No. 8 in G major, Op. 30 No. 3

Beethoven's Eighth Violin Sonata is perhaps the most playful of the three sonatas of Op. 30. Written in 1802, it reveals a composer who could transform the smallest musical gesture into something unexpected. The opening "Allegro assai" is energetic and conversational; its themes passed back and forth between violin and piano with a sense of spontaneity and wit. The second movement offers a striking contrast: graceful, poised, and lyrical, it allows the violin to sing over a gently pulsing accompaniment. The final "Allegro piacevole" returns to Beethoven's characteristic humor and rhythmic ingenuity, bringing the sonata to an exuberant conclusion.

Yet beneath its apparent lightness is an extraordinary degree of concentration. Beethoven's music continually asks us to listen closely—to a pause, a turn of phrase, a sudden change of harmony, or an unexpected rhythmic accent. From this highly articulated musical world, the program moves into something altogether more elusive.

Einojuhani Rautavaara — *Whispering*

Rautavaara's Whispering was written for Hilary Hahn's *In 27 Pieces: the Hilary Hahn Encores* project, which commissioned 27 composers to create short works for violin and piano. In contrast to Beethoven's sharply defined gestures, Rautavaara invites sound itself to become the subject.

The title is wonderfully suggestive. The music seems to hover between speech and silence, with delicate sonorities and shifting colors creating an atmosphere that is intimate rather than declarative. After the energy and precision of Beethoven, *Whispering* asks us to listen differently—to the resonance between notes, to what seems almost to disappear, and to the space surrounding the music.

Valentin Silvestrov — *Two Pieces*

Silvestrov's music continues this movement inward. Like Rautavaara, he often creates an expressive world in which sound seems to emerge from memory. His music can feel simultaneously present and distant, as though familiar gestures have returned after passing through time.

This quality of remembrance is particularly important to Silvestrov's musical language. Rather than rejecting the past, he allows echoes of earlier music—lyricism, song, cadence, nostalgia—to exist within a contemporary harmonic world. *Two Pieces* therefore becomes a kind of bridge: the music looks backward even as it remains unmistakably of our own time.

Placed immediately after *Whispering*, the two works form a brief meditation between the two great sonatas. Rautavaara creates the space; Silvestrov fills that space with memory. And from there, the music turns toward one of the great Romantic sonatas for violin and piano.

César Franck — Violin Sonata in A major

Franck's Violin Sonata, composed in 1886 and dedicated to the celebrated violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, is one of the supreme achievements of the violin-and-piano repertoire. Its four movements are bound together by recurring musical ideas, creating an almost organic sense of growth. A theme introduced early in the sonata can return transformed later, as though remembered from a different emotional perspective. That idea of transformation makes Franck a particularly meaningful destination after the Rautavaara and Silvestrov.

The opening "Allegretto ben moderato" is intimate and searching rather than overtly dramatic. The second movement erupts with passionate energy, while the Recitativo–Fantasia turns inward again, suspended between improvisation and song. Finally, the famous "Allegretto poco mosso" unfolds as a long, luminous dialogue between violin and piano. Its canonic writing gives the impression that the two instruments are remembering—and rediscovering—the same melody from different places.

In this context, the Franck can be heard not simply as the Romantic culmination of the program, but as its answer. Beethoven gives us music shaped by clarity, gesture, and dramatic invention. Rautavaara asks us to listen to sound itself. Silvestrov turns sound toward memory. Franck gathers these impulses into something expansive and deeply human: music that remembers, transforms, and ultimately sings.

The journey is therefore not simply from Beethoven to Franck, or from the nineteenth century to the present. It is a journey through different ways of listening—**from gesture, to sound, to memory, to song.**